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LEGENDARY AND HISTORICAL SOURCES OF THE  
EARLIER WAGNERIAN OPERAS

(RIENZI, FLYING DUTCHMAN, LOHENGRIN, TANNHAUSER)

BY

MARY AGNES MURPHY

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THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF MUSIC

IN

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

OF THE

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THE LEGENDARY AND HISTORICAL SOURCES OF THE EARLIER  
WAGNERIAN OPERAS, RIENZI, THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, TANNHAUSER AND  
LOHENGRIN.

C H A P T E R I

RIENZI

The Opera Rienzi is based upon Bulwer's Lytton novel and the historical account of Cola Di Rienzi who lived in the 14th century from 1313 to 1354. As his name implies he was an Italian and of humble parentage. His father, Lorenzo Gabrini, was a tavern keeper. Rienzi was a good student, devoting much of his time to the study of Latin writers, historians, orators and poets. He was a dreamer, but he had the energy to carry his dreams to realization. His mind was filled with stories and glories of the power of ancient Rome, and his dreams were to restore his native city, Rome, to its pristine greatness. Rienzi's brother had been killed by a noble, a member of the ruling class. This, also gave impetus to Rienzi's desire to better his country.

At thirty years of age he was a notary and a person of importance in the city. In the year of 1343 he was sent on a public errand to Pope Clement VI at Avignon. Rienzi denounced the aristocratic rulers and nobles with the aristocratic rulers and nobles with audacity and boldness which caused him the enmity of powerful men. Through his ability and efficiency in discharging his business he won Pope Clement's favour, who gave Colonna an official position at his court. Rienzi was planning the



restoration of Rome. In 1344 he returned to Rome. In May 1347 all the people in the city were invited to a parliament at the capitol on Sunday, May 20. Cola made a rather elaborate showing as he was dressed in full armour and was attended by the Papal Vicar. He headed the procession to the capitol where he addressed the crowd, speaking with fascinating eloquence of the servitude and redemption of Rome.<sup>1</sup> All classes of people accepted Rienzi without any disturbance. It seemed that the nobles thought it useless to try to make any attempt whatever to make away with Rienzi. They left town or went into hiding without striking a blow. New laws were drawn up and published and accepted with acclaim, giving Rienzi unlimited authority. The nobles had been reigning with license and disorder, so Cola's reign of stern justice was a marked contrast. Poets praised him, Petrarch called him the new Camillus and urged him to continue his noble work. Having accomplished the control of Rome, Rienzi started a campaign to restore the authority of Rome over all the cities and provinces of Italy. He planned a large federation at Rome, asking each city and province to send a representative to this assembly at which the establishment of a government at Rome would be considered. The meeting did not have the practical result, that Rienzi expected. Rienzi's weakness was beginning to show, instead of going about his business of forming a government, he issued an edict, summoning the emperor, Louis the Bavarian and his rival, Charles, the imperial electors and others concerned in a quarrel to appear

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1 - Encyclopedia Britiannica.





before him that he might pronounce judgment in the case. He did not succeed in pronouncing the judgment as the people he summoned did not appear. However, Queen Joana and her foe, King Louis of Hungary, recognized Cola's power, and appealed to him for aid and protection. Rienzi was using his power for personal gain. He seized Stephen Colonna and other barons who had spoken ill of him. He did not dare to keep these men imprisoned long so they were soon released. The Pope became disgusted with Rienzi's pride and arrogance, and in October gave the legate power to bring Cola to trial. The Barons gathered an army together. Rienzi obtained troops from Louis of Hungary and others and defeated the Baron's army in November. In the battle, Stephen Colonna was killed. He celebrated his victories much as the older Romans did with feasts and celebrations.

This aroused the Pope to a very high pitch and he pronounced Cola a criminal, a pagan, and a heretic. Rienzi knew he was in a very insecure position. When a very slight disturbance took place in December, he fled to a monastery and remained two years. On leaving the monastery, he appealed to Charles IV for help to aid him in delivering Italy from its oppressors. Instead of giving Cola help, Charles IV put him in jail and later turned him over to Pope Clement. In 1352, Rienzi was sentenced to death, but through some reason remained in jail. In December of the same year the Pope died and the new Pope, Pope Innocent, wished to strike a blow at the barons. Rienzi was the tool, he was released and given the title of Senator. Pope Innocent sent Cola to





Italy where he was received into former favor. Cola lost an attack on Palestina. His reverses and imprisonment caused him to become frienzied and cruel. Cola returned to Rome where he seized a soldier of fortune, Fra Monreal, and put him to death. Through other cruel and arbitrary deeds, he soon lost all his friends. He was a disappointment to the people, their passions were aroused and a tumult broke out. Rienzi attempted to address the people but the building in which he stood was fired and in trying to escape, he was killed by the mob.

Bulwer used Rienzi's life and fate in forming the subject of his famous novel. Julius Mosen used Rienzi's career in his tragedy and Petrarch honored Rienzi in his famous ode, Spirito Gentil.

The story of the opera is substantially that of Bulwer's novel. Wagner re-created nothing, he was simply an adapter. In Bulwer's novel, Rienzi was married to a woman by the name of Nina, Wagner fills the place of Nina with Irene, sister of Rienzi. Irene is a conspicuously noble character.

The action takes place in Rome in the fourteenth century. The houses of Colonna and Orsini are engaged in civil warfare, in which many prominent families are engaged. The opera opens at night in a street near the Church of St. John, Lateran. Orsini, a patrician, accompanied by friends, attempts to abduct Irene, the brother of Irene, who is a Papal Notary, a dreamer and a patriot. As the aristocratic ruffians are about to rush away with the beautiful Irene, Adriano, her lover, and from the rival house of Irene's brother, comes upon the scene.



Adriano enters upon the fight from love of battle, but when he sees Irene, the desire for combat is greatly increased. Adriano saves Irene and influenced by his love for her, resolves to throw his fortunes with Rienzi. The nobles wishing to settle the combat take up a place just outside the city. Rienzi overhears them and has the gates closed. None can re-enter without taking the oath of peace. The people elect Cola, Liberator and Tribune.

In the second act, the patricians sue for pardon. Adriano knows their humility is a ruse and that a conspiracy is on foot to kill Rienzi. Rienzi apparently payed little attention to Adriano's warning. Orsini attempts to kill Cola, but he is saved by a steel breast plate. Rienzi sentenced to death the offending nobles. Adriano's father is one, but because of Adriano's and Irene's pleading Rienzi frees the nobles. He resented the personal attack less, considering it a blow aimed at Roman liberty.

In the third act, the nobles have thrown off all pretense and are lined up in battle array. Adriano pleads for mercy, but the battle is carried on and his father killed.

In the fourth act the scene is again before the Lateron Church. Rienzi has lost public favor, the Pope and Emporer have been won over by the nobles. Acco and Baroncelli claim that Rienzi has been treacherous. The people are fickle and raise the cry "Down with Rienzi". Rienzi addresses them and has them about won back, when the church doors open and the Papal Legate reads the bill excommunicating him. The people flee.

In the fifth act Irene finds Rienzi in the capitol at prayer. He warns her that their cause is lost and tells her to go to



Adriano for protection. Irene refuses to go. A mob surrounds the capitol and fires it. Rienzi attempts to make another address, but does not succeed. Adriano sees Irene in the glare and goes to them. The three perish in the capitol.





## C H A P T E R   I I

### THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

The "Flying Dutchman" is no new tale, but like all myths, a development. In the literature of Greece we find the wanderer in the person of Ulysses, yearning for hearth and home.

Odysseus - the Latin equivalent, Ulixes, erroneously written, Ulysses - was King of Ithaca and son of Laërtes and Anticlea, the latter the daughter of Antolycus.

Odysseus's wife, Penelope, the daughter of Iscarius, is said to have been obtained for him by her uncle, Tyndareos, in gratitude for counsel given by him. When his son, Telemacleus, was still an infant, Agamemon and Menelais, as Homer tells us, prevailed upon him to take part in the expedition against Troy. Their task was a hard one because it was predicted that it would be twenty years before he saw his wife and child again. Later writers relate that he was bound, as one of Helen's suitors, to take part in the scheme, but tried to escape his obligation by feigning madness, and among other acts yoked a horse and ox to his plough and so ploughed a field. Upon being persuaded further by Polamedes, Nestor, Menelaüs and Telemacleus, Odysseus hitched Telemacleus to the plow. He betrayed himself and had to accompany them to war. Odysseus led the troops of Ithaca and the surrounding islands to Troy in twelve vessels.





In contrast to a later legend, which represents him as a cowardly, deceitful and intriguing personage, he always appears in Homer, among the noblest and most respected of heroes, and on account of his good qualities he is the declared favorite of Athene. He combines, in his person, courage and determined perseverance with prudence, ingenuity, cunning and eloquence. Thus he disembarks and goes with Menelaüs to demand the surrender of Helen. Then he is dispatched with Agamemon by the Greeks to reconcile enraged Achilles. With Diomedes, he captures the spy, Dolon, and surprises Rhesus and it is said that these two heroes stole the Palladium from Troy. When Agamemon wishes to flee, Odysseus opposes the idea with utmost decision. Everywhere he avails himself of the right time and right place, and where courage and cunning are needed he is of the foremost. After Achilles' death in a contest with Ajax, he received the hero's arms as a recognition of his services, and by his ingenuity caused the fall of Troy.

Immediately upon his departure to the city of Cicones, here while plundering the city he lost seventy two of his companions. He was desirous of rounding the southeast point of Peloponesus but was caught by a storm and carried to north Africa, the land of the Lotus Eaters, whence he had to drag his companions by force to prevent his friends from forgetting their homes for the love of the lotus food. He traveled then into the Western Sea, coming first to the country of Cyclopes where, with twelve of his comrades he was shut up in a cavern by Polyphennus, the one-eyed giant. The one-eyed giant had eaten six of Odysseus' companions before the



latter intoxicated him, and deprived him of his one eye. The anger of Poseidon on whom Polyhenus called for revenge, pursued him and kept him far from his country. On the island of Aeolus, the keeper of the winds, he found hospital entertainment, and received on departure a leathern bag, in which were enclosed all the winds except the western. The latter would have carried him in nine days to Ithace; but while Odysseus was resting his comrades opened the bag, which they imagined contained treasure, and the winds thus released carried him back to Aeolus. He ordered them off the islands, regarding them as enemies of the gods. On coming to Telephlus, the city of Lamus, King Antiphates and his haestrygones, cannibals of immense stature, shattered eleven of their vessels, and the twelfth was saved by Odysseus' wariness. On the island of Aeolus the Sorceress Circe' turned part of his crew into swine, but with the help of Hermes, who gave him an antidote against her charms, he compelled her to restore them to their original human shape, and spent a whole year with her in enjoyment and pleasure.

Circe bade him sail to the entrance into the lower world on the farther bank Oceanus, and there question the shade of the seer Foresias concerning his return. He learned that the malice of Posiedon still pursued him, but he would obtain his object if his companions spared the cattle of Helios on the island of Thrinocia; otherwise after a long time deprived of comrades on a foreign ship, he would reach home. He returned to the island of Circe' and with her valuable directions and a favoring wind, started home.





Passing the isle of Sirens the women inhabitants tried to lure his vessel upon the rocks by their sweet songs but Odysseus resisted them by filling his sailors' ears with wax and lashing himself to the mast and sailing through Scylla and Charybdis. He reached the island of Thrinacia, where he was compelled to land his comrades.

They were detained for a month by unfavorable winds and his companions, overcome by hunger, in spite of the oath they had sworn him during his absence, slaughtered the finest cattle of Helios. Scarcely had they set to sea when a terrible storm broke forth and Zeus split the ship in twain with a flash of lightning. Odysseus was the only one who did not perish and he clung to the mast and keel and was carried to the island of Agygia, the abode of the nymph Calypso, daughter of Atlas. He remained here seven years and Calypso promised him immortality and eternal youth, if he would consent to remain with her and be her husband. But yearning for his home and wife made him proof against Agygia's snares. His protectress, Athene, during Poseidius' absence, prevailed on Zeus, in an assembly of the gods to decree his return and to send Hermes to order Calypso to release him. Borne near to Scheria, when Poseidon caught sight of him and shattered his raft in pieces. By means of the veil of Ino Leucothea, he reached land in safety and met with Nausicae, the king's daughter, who conducted him into the Phalacien city before her parents. He was treated hospitably and presented with gifts; and was on board one of their marvelous vessels and reached his own country after an absence of twenty years. He reached home just in time to save



his wife from being forced into a marriage and his kingdom from being wasted. The suitor who could bend Odysseus' bow and win the shooting match should have Penelope as his wife, but not one could bend the bow. Disguised as a beggar and under fire of ridicule, Odysseus seized his bow and killed all the suitors. Then he made himself known to his wife.

The Wanderer entered in the early period of Christianity and gave us the gloomy picture of the Wandering Jew, acursed and hopeless of all save the end of oblivion.

The Wandering Jew who had witnessed the Crucifixion, and had been condemned to live and wander over the earth until the time of Christ's second coming. In 1228, a certain archbishop of Armenia made a pilgrimage to England and related the story of a Jew called Joseph who had often eaten at the table of the archbishop in Armenia. The story of Joseph is as follows: At the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as the Jews were dragging Jesus forth, at the door of the judgment hall, Cartaphilus, a porter of the hall in Delatis' service struck Jesus saying "Go quicker, Jesus, go quicker; why do you loiter?" Jesus looking back on him with a severe countenance said to him, "I am going and you will wait till I return."

According as our Lord said, this Cartaphilus is still awaiting his return. At the time of the incident, the Jew was thirty years old. When he attains the age of a hundred years he always returns to the same age as he was when our Lord suffered. After Christ's death, Cartaphilus was baptized by the Apostle





Paul and was called Joseph. He does not speak unless questioned and then talks without smiling or levity, looking forward with fear to the coming of Jesus Christ. He tells of the events of old times, and of the witnesses of resurrection who rose with Christ and went into the Holy City. He also tells of the creed of the apostles and of their separation and preaching. He refuses all gifts offered him and is content with slight food and clothing.

In 1542 another bishop tells of a stranger who attended a sermon at Hamburg, Germany, and made himself remarkable by the great devotion with which he listened. His name was Ahasnerus, a Jew, original passion of Jesus Christ, and that since that time he had wandered through many countries. He said he was one of the Jews who dragged Jesus before Pilate, and on the way when Jesus stopped to rest he pushed him forward and rudely told him to go on. The Savior looked at him and said "I shall stop and repose, but thou shalt go on;" upon which the Jew was seized with an irresistible desire to wander; leaving wife and children and traveling from one country to another. He also was taciturn, declaring God contributed to all his wants. He related curious events which he had seen in different countries and at different times to peoples' great astonishment. All of these details and many more are told in a letter, dated the twentieth-ninth of June, 1564, which was printed in German and French. On this occasion the Jew spoke good German, in the dialect of Saxony; but when he or another person under the same character appeared in the Netherlands in 1575, he spoke Spanish. A few years later the Wandering Jew arrived



in Strasburg and, presenting himself before the magistrates, informed them that he had visited their city just two hundred years before; which proved to be true by a reference to the registers of the town.

The Wandering Jew proceeded next to the West Indies, and returned thence to France, where he made his appearance in 1604 and appears to have caused considerable sensation. As during the time he was there the country was visited by destructive hurricanes. It was believed that these visitations accompanied the Jew in his wanderings. Even at the present day in Brittany and Picardy, when a violent hurricane comes on, the peasantry are in the habit of making the sign of the cross and exclaiming, "est juif-errant qui passe!" On April twentieth-second, 1774, the Wandering Jew, or some individual who had personated him, appeared in Brussels, where he told the story to the Bourgeois. His name was Issac Lquedem. He has not been heard of since but is supposed to be traveling in some unknown part of the Globe. The Wandering Jew was the subject of many popular ballads written in both France and England. There are several versions of the Dutch legend, the different countries giving each their local touch.

The Dutch transferred the legend in the middle ages to their own favorite element, the sea. They were among the most daring and skillful on the sea. The struggle of the Dutchman against contending winds and waves typified their own battles with the powers of Old Ocean, and their determination to conquer all hazards. The Dutch version tells of one Captain Van Straaten who





anxious to get home in attempting to round the Cape of Good Hope was repeatedly driven back by heavy head winds. Enraged beyond endurance at being baffled, he swore a mighty oath that he would double the cape if it took him until the day of judgment. He pronounced his own doom; until the day of judgment he should struggle in vain to pass the cape. The latter legend is that the Dutchman had one hope that was to find a woman faithful to death. One day the Dutchman rescues a crew of Captain Daland. The Captain offers a chest of treasures to Daland for the latter's daughter Senta.

Senta is romantic and promises to marry the Dutchman. Senta has a lover, Erik, who pleads with her to remain on shore. Captain Van Straaten sees Erik pleading with Senta. He thinks Senta false and sets sail. Senta throws herself into the sea and in a rising cloud Captain Van Straaten and Senta were seen ascending to Heaven.

The German legend has Herr Von Falkenberg hero. He is condemned to sail forever around the North Sea on a ship without helm or steerman playing at dice for his soul with the devil.

But the commonest version is that of the English. The Captain of the vessel, Van Der Decken, was condemned for his blasphemy to sail round the Cape forever to make port. The legend is as follows:

She was an Amsterdam vessel and sailed from port seventy years ago. Her Master's name was Van Der Decken. He was a staunch seaman, and would his own way in spite of the devil. For



all that, never a sailor under him had reason to complain; though how it is on board with them nobody knows. The story is this: that in doubling the cape they were a long day trying to weather the Table Bay. However, the wind headed them and went against them more and more, and Van Der Decken walked the deck, swearing at the wind. Just after sunset a vessel spoke him, asking him if he did not mean to go into bay that night. Van Der Decken replied, "May I be eternally damned if I do, though I should beat about here till the day of judgment!" To be sure, he never did go into bay, for it is believed that he continues to beat about in these seas still, and will do so long enough. This vessel is never seen but with foul weather along with her.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick Marryat, English sailor and novelist in his "Phantom Ship", relieves the Wanderer from his ceaseless wanderings by means of an aumlet, or religious charm.

According to Sir Walter Scott, the Flying Dutchman was originally a vessel laden with bullion, a murder was committed on board and there after the plague broke out among the crew, which closed all ports to the ill-fated craft. There is no poetry and a total absence of the personal tragedy in that version. The idea of the salvation of the Wanderer through the self-sacrificing love of woman, an idea to be found in literature and legends older than this, was introduced into the story before. Heine saw the play of which he wrote. In the memoirs of Herr Von Schnabelervopski,





the sentence of Van Der Decken is that he shall wander till doomsday unless he shall be released by a woman faithful until death. The Devil does not believe in women of this sort, and therefore allows the Wanderer to go ashore once every seven years to see if he can find one. He meets failure after failure, till finally he falls in with a Scotch merchant whose daughter has already learned this story and formed a romantic attachment for him. She has his picture in her room, and when her father, having accepted the Dutchman's offer for her hand, brings him home she at once recognizes him and determines to sacrifice herself to save him. Just at this point Herr Von Schnabelewopski is called away for a short time, and when he returns he sees the Dutchman about to sail away without his wife. He loves her and will save her from his fate. But she true to her vow, ascends a high rock, when she throws herself into the sea. The spell is broken and the united lovers enter eternal rest. This absence of Von Schnabelewopski, Wagner filled with the interview between Senta and Erik. Heine probably received his inspiration of the self-sacrificing love of woman from the above mentioned memoirs of Herr Von Schnabelewopski.

In the Flying Dutchman, the poetic ability of the master was first exhibited. He ceased to be a mere librette writer and became a dramatic poet. His version of the famous old legend is a lovely one, and much of its increased beauty is the product of his own genius. It was, as he himself said in the oft-quoted communication, the Flying Dutchman was the first folk poem which forced its way into my heart, and called on me as a man and artist



to its meaning, and mould it in a work of art.<sup>1</sup>

This is the way in which Wagner regarded his subject matter of his story. The figure of the Flying Dutchman is a mythical creation of the folk. A primal trait of human nature speaks out from it with a heart-enthralling force. This trait, in its most universal meaning, is the longing after rest from amid storms of life, this can be traced from older forms of the legend as seen in the stories of Ulysses and the Wandering Jew.

The sea in its turn became the soil of life; yet no longer the landlocked sea of the Grecian world but the great ocean that engirdles the earth.<sup>3</sup> The fetters of the older world were broken; the longing of Ulysses, back to hearth and home and wedded life, after feeding on the sufferings of the never-dying Jew until it became a yearning for death, had mounted to the craving for a new, an unknown home, invisible as yet, but dimly boded. This vast spread feature fronts us in the myths of the Flying Dutchman, that seaman's poem of the world historical age of journeys of discovery. Here we light upon a remarkable mixture, a blend, effected by the spirit of the Folk, of the character of Ulysses with that of the wandering Jew. The Hollandic Mariner, in punishment for his temerity, is condemned by the Devil to do battle with the unresting waves to all eternity. Like Ahasuerus, he yearns for his suffering to be ended by death. The Dutchman, however, may

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-1- Communication

-2- W. F. Henderson. Richard Wagner

-3- W. F. Henderson. Richard Wagner



gain his redemption, denied to the undying Jew at the hands of a woman who, of very love, shall sacrifice herself for him. The yearning for death thus spurs him on to seek this woman; but is no longer the home-tending Penelope of Ulysses, as courted in the days of old, but the quintessence of womanhood.<sup>1</sup>

While Mr. Wagner was making a voyage from Riga to Paris, a hurricane overtook the vessel he was on. The fury of the storm suggested to the composer, Heinrich Heine's poetical version of the Flying Dutchman. But undoubtedly Mr. Wagner made a thorough study of Fitzball's play, the early legends of the different countries as well as obtaining the sailors' views. He found sailors who still believed in the phantom ship.

Wagner becomes a dramatic poet in weaving these stories together. The following is the synopsis of the opera: The hero is the Dutch Captain, the Wandering Jew of the ocean. In trying to double the Cape of Good Hope in a gale, he swore he would accomplish the doubling or plow the seas forever. Satan overheard these words and condemned him to sail the seas forever. He could escape this sentence by finding a woman who would love him faithfully unto death. He was allowed to go ashore once in seven years to find this woman.

In the first act, the Dutchman's ship can be seen approaching Norwegian Bay. The ships masts are black and the sails are blood red. The Dutchman lands and makes the acquaintance of a Norwegian, Captain Deland, who has just landed from a cruise and







and is on his way to his home. The Dutchman receives Daland's permission to woo Daland's daughter, Senta. Daland is to receive a chest of treasures if the Dutchman can win Senta.

The second act is changed to Deland's home. Neighborhood girls are spinning under the direction of Senta's nurse. Senta sits idly gazing at a picture of the Dutchman. The girls tease her about the picture. Senta has a lover, Erick, who enters and tells her of a dream he has had. He dreams that Senta Falls in love with the Dutchman and is following him to sea. Senta confesses to Erick, who is a jealous lover, that she believes the dream is a warning of her fate.

The door opens, the Dutchman and Daland enter, Senta can find no words of greeting, her father bids her show a warmer hospitality. The father wishes to gain the wealth which the Dutchman promises in return for his daughter's hand. Senta does not think of the wealth, but because of her romantic nature falls in love with the handsome stranger. The Dutchman tries to dissuade her, but Senta is determined. The happy wanderer exclaims in an ecstasy of joy

"She gives her hand. I conquer you,  
Dread powers of Hell, while she is true!"<sup>1</sup>

The last act opens Daland's and the Dutchman's ships riding at anchor. Daland's ship is gaily lighted, full of life and animation and is a strong contrast to the Dutchman's quiet, black masted and red sailed ship. Deland's ship is setting sail



and the maidens have come to the shore to bid the crew "goodbye". These maidens challenge the crew of the Dutchman's to dance with them, but they get no response, no one appears on the deck.

A storm begins to arise, the Dutchman's old and failing crew come on board singing in wierd and unnatural voices of their captain and the maiden who is to deliver them from their fate. The action is momentary and gloom settles upon the ship. Dutchman and Senta are seen approaching the beach. Erick appears and pleads with Senta to remain. The Dutchman misinterprets the girl's dejection and mad with grief bids farewell and hastens to his ship, where he proclaims who he is. Senta runs to a cliff and cries to him, but he cannot hear her through the storm. Senta throws herself into the ocean, immediately the storm clears, the phantom ship sinks and in the sunset, the Dutchman and Senta are seen ascending to Heaven in each other's arms.



## CHAPTER III

### TANNHÄUSER

Like the Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser, is a development of popular myths and superstition. Different stories are told and retold gathering color and the interpretation of the people in many localities and countries; these are often combined with other legends and myths so that they are hardly recognizable. The staff of the Pope, Vermsberg, Castle of Wartburg, Tannhäuser, Elizabeth of Landgrave are examples of legends and myths combined and changed, so that when the original sources are found the results are very startling.

Stories of staffs and rods can be traced as far back as Adam, then comes Moses' staff and the legend of Glastonbury Thorn. The first story of a rod is taken from the Holy Bible.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and take of them rods, one for each father's house, of all their princes' according to their fathers' houses twelve rods. Write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aron's name upon the rod of Levi; for there shall be one rod for each head of their fathers' houses. And thou shalt lay them up in the tent of meeting before the testimony, where I meet you, and it shall come to pass, that the man whom I shall choose, his rod shall bud: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against you. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel and all their princes gave him rods, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tent of testimony. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses went into the tent of Testimony; and





behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was buded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bare up Almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods the Lord gave unto the Children of Israel: and every man took his rod. And the Lord said unto Aaron but back the rod of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the children of rebellion; that thou mayest make an end of their murmurings against me, that they die not. Thus did Moses".<sup>1</sup>

The story of Moses' Rod is as follows: "while Moses was living with the Midianite Reuel, he noticed a staff in the garden and he took it to be his walking stick. The staff was Joseph's and Reuel carried it away with him when he fled from Egypt. This same staff Adam carried with him out of Eden. Noah inherited it, and gave it to Shem. It passed into the hands of Abraham, and Abraham left it to Issac; and when Jacob fled from his brother's anger into Mesopotania, he carried it in his hand, and gave it at his death to his son Joseph."<sup>2</sup>

The Glastonbury Thorn is a legend of the middle ages, but even today there are people who believe in it. This story is told by William of Malmesbury, who died A.D. 1142.

The legend of Glastonbury thorn sprung from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, who was sent by the apostle of Philip to preach the Gospel in Britain. On reaching Ynisuritein, afterwards called Glastonbury, he stuck his staff into the ground, to indicate he meant to abide there. The staff put forth leaves and branches and at every Christmas it blossoms. This thorn, till the reign of Elizabeth had two trunks, but a Puritan attempted to cut it down. However, he was punished; for not only did he cut his leg

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1- The Holy Bible

2- Brewer-The Readers' Handbook.



severely, but also lost one of his eyes by a crip of the thorn striking it. The multilated trunk, still flourished and after wards when carted into a ditch, took root and bloomed. Part was stolen and carried into different parts of the Island where it flourished. In the reign of Charles I, the original tree was cut down, but still there are several plants about Glastonbury reared from the old stock. In mild winters, it is said, they still bloom.<sup>1</sup>

The following shows the relationship of the Holy Grail, Venusberg, Arthur and Tannhauser to the interpretation of Wagner's Tannhauser.

At present there exists three theories as to the origin and probable localization of what was known in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries as the mountain of Venus. One in Germany, Horselburg in Thurmugia and Italy. The latter myth is supposed to have traveled from Italy into Germany.

The legend of the Venusberg is an outgrowth of the legend of the Holy Grail.<sup>2</sup> Christien de Troyes, in 1190, gives the first account of it. His patron Prince, whose father had brought from the East blood of Christ, gave him a book. From which Christian propably received his inspiration for the story.

Later, Konrad Burdach advanced two theories of the legend. The first that it was a Christianized relic of a pre-christian or pagan rite, connected with the return of Spring, or with drindic worsnup and of Celtic origin. The second, that it

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1-Brewer - The Dictionary of Miracles  
2-Hertz, Parsival.



was developed from the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, which is related above.

The origin of the Grail legend in the West, has its first appearance in the 12th century and its growing popularity is connected directly with the Crusades, which also began in the 12th century, and is traceable through them to the imposing Great Entrance of the Byzantine Mass, which the Crusaders often witnessed. In the 13th century the legend of the Holy Grail was altered and changed, the word itself meant a carousal, a place of sensual pleasure. In the literature of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries of North and throughout Germany, the word "Gral" means earthly bliss. This is due to the fact that the Church of Rome did not sanction the legend of the Holy Grail. The legend contained elements of which the church could not sanction. At first the legend was supposed to give him who was in its presence everything needed for happiness, which was purity of the highest order. But the idea of the unlimited power of supply was so large that the conception of this need supplying vessel was easily changed from needed to wanted.

In 1357, a century after the last of the crusaders, Venusberg first appears in literature in a Dutch poem, "Die Kinder Von Limberg" or "Margarete Von Limburg". There were many attempts made by the historians of the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries to locate Venusberg. To associate it with some mountain in Schwabia, Thuringia, Meininger, Vorarlberg, Italy and Cyprus. The diversity of these attempts to locate Venusberg is strong evidence







that the myth is not a local tradition. It is a myth that covers a wide area and is localized where circumstances make it easy. In the Zimmerische Chronik in the fifteenth century the French court is referred to as Vaneris Berg. Mr. Barto gives many references of citizens and scholars who claimed to have visited Venusberg, he goes on to say, "In the cases where attempts are made to localize the myth we feel that it is mere caprice and not definite fact which lies back of it." <sup>1</sup> Mr. Barto in discussing Grasse <sup>2</sup> and Kluge <sup>3</sup> says the former "does not commit himself as to the location, but he mentions various mountains about which the myth clung, chiefly the Horselberg in Thuringia". Kluge tries to prove that the myth of the Venusberg had its origin about a mountain near Norcia in Northern Italy, and thence it spread northward into Germany. But the evidence which Kluge uses proves contrary to what he wishes it to prove. The German character, Tannhauser, who plays the leading rôle also tends to prove that Venusberg must be of German origin. Another account by Antonises de la Sale makes this statement that, "a German knight who entered this kingdom or paradise of the Sibyl and that the queen greeted him in native German", shows the German influence. This use of a German knight and German language shows their affection for this love Grotto and Magic mountain greater than the Italians by whom, or at least in whose midst, it is said to have been conceived, otherwise the Italian characters and language would have been used.

The spirit of this mountain of the Sibyl in Italy is

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1- P.S. Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend.

2- Grasse, Der Tannhauser Und Ewige Jude.

3- Kluge, Buntsee Blatter.



of two-fold nature, a mountain of love and a mountain of magic. The love characteristic was not connected with the mountain until a much later date than the magic characteristic. Kluge points out that there are two neighboring peaks and that the myth of the Sibyl and her magic clung to one peak while that of Frau Venus became attached to the other. But this does not prove anything for the Hürselberg in Germany was not only the seat of Frau Venus according to tradition, but also a mountain of Magic.

Mr. Barto concludes with evidence that the myth is primarily of German origin; that thence it traveled south into Italy in the 15th century when the German mind was reaching out in its attempt to locate the place, and the revival of classical learning suggested a classical residence for Venus. The activity of Germans in this search shows the whole story had become for them a familiar one at home. That they searched so diligently further attests the fact that the myth had no definite local origin. It became possible therefore, to attach it to many different mountains, Most conspicuous among these, because of the revival of classical interest, became the mountain in the southern country which through a certain mystery clinging about it from an earlier day made it an appropriate point upon which to fix the story.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time in the 13th century, the legends of the Grail and of Arthur take a turn at once bizzare and unexpected. The two went hand-in-hand in their deterioration. Their downfall was due to the popular mind. Arthur and his knights like the

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1- Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend.



Holy Grail had stood for purity and manly virtue for the highest type. This change from the high and lofty to the low and debased, in the instance of the Arthur legend, seems to have compassed the whole gamut of human morals with surprising readiness and speed.<sup>1</sup>

The similarity of Arthur's death is similar to one version of Tannhauser's death used later in Wagner's libretto. The story of Arthur's death as told by Layamon in his translation of Wace's Roman de Brut (1205) is the following:- In this account Arthur is spoken of as an English king, showing that by this time the tradition of enmity existing between Saxon and Briton had largely died out.<sup>2</sup> It tells of Arthur's proposed retirement after his death to a place called Avalon, -"and I myself will go to Avalon, to the most beauteous of women, to the queen Argante, an elf wondrous fair; and she will heal me of my wounds, and made me quite well with a healing drink. Afterwards I will come to my kingdom, and dwell among the Britons in great bliss'. While he was saying this a little boat came, borne by waves. There were two women therein, of marvelous beauty. They took Arthus and laid him in the boat, and sailed away.....And the Britons believe yet that he is alive, and dwells in Avalon with the fairest of elves; and the Britons still look for his coming again." <sup>3</sup>

Here is a proof of the way in which myths and legends change in interpretation in different countries. This legend has taken a step toward the mystical poetry of Tennyson.

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1 & 2-Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend.

3 , Barto Studies in Tannhauserlegend.







The first writer of the Arthur legend was Wolfram Von Eschenbach, in "Parzival", he gives an account of the Grail, which is in a lofty tone. Then comes writers who hint at other things. Heinrich Von dem Turllein in "Diu Crône", (1220) who copies from his predecessors in one. The knights are involved in escapades of doubtful character. Arthur is not represented, but a beginning is made. In 1250 a remarkable poem "Der Wartburgkrieg" originated, its authorship is unknown. The subject matter is from traditional and legendary sources. It is a very well known German poem. The poem is divided into two parts, in the second part singers of fame are represented in a contest song, alternately proposing and answering riddles. The subject matter of the poem, is that Arthur is living in a mountain in a luxurious court. It is suggested that Arthur is a mythical personage. The country is spoken of as Ankulis and without doubt means England. Living in this same mountain are two women, - Felicia and Juno. According to classical mythology, Juno has a reputation that is not spotless. Felicia is not as well known, her name means good fortune and bliss. She is the child of Sibyl. The general impression is that of a place of sensual enjoyment, a sort of love Grotto or hollow mountain of doubtful repute.<sup>1</sup> Felicia seems to be identical with Frau Saelde, as Simrock points out.<sup>2</sup> Heinrich von dem Turllein in his "Du Crône" speaks of Frau Saelde as living on a high mountain in a beautiful castle and of having relations with Arthur.<sup>3</sup> He furthermore men-

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1-Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend

2-Wartburgkrieg, Simrock

3-Crône



tions all in one breath Frau Saelde and Frau Minne<sup>1</sup>. All this suggests strongly a sort of Venusberg.<sup>2</sup>

Wartburkrieg is probably a development of Avalon's account of Arthur being carried to a mountain by two fair women, where he was to be healed and then return to his kingdom. In Wartburkrieg we also find Lohengrin, who is sent out of the mountain by Arthur. Lohengrin is one of the chief knights after the quest of the Holy Grail. Furthermore, the poet asks how all this court is fed and clothed and otherwise provided for, he leaves his question unanswered. The notion of unlimited supply here suggested in plain reference to the Grail. Arthur is the Grail King in this account. And the Bell? Is it not the bell of the Gralburg? The bell which the knights of the Grail in Parsival hear ringing far off on Munsalvaesch?<sup>3</sup> Truly a mysterious bell and mentioned twice the account as a thing of importance in the riddle.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Barto in making a summary of the Grail, Venusberg, and Arthur says,- In point of time the Grail legend is first to enter<sup>5</sup> it existed from the time of the Crusades about 1095 - ;248. The Crusaders brought back from the Byzantine Mass the legend of the Holy Grail. About 1150 the name of Arthur and the Grail legend are associated. These legends suffer degradation at the hands of

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1- Crone

2- Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend

3-The Arthur of the English poets

4-Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend

5- Barto, Studies in Tannhauserlegend



the people. Finally through the process of story telling, in the castle where the cup was supposed to repose, came to mean a place of sinful paradise, out of which the Arthurian hero Lohengrin was said to come. When the deterioration of Arthur and the Grail had become fixed, the Venusberg appears.<sup>1</sup> The legend of such a mountain answers closely to the mountain called Der Gral, described by Dietrich a niem, in the Wartburgkrieg account, where Felicia an Juno dwell in the mountain with Arthur. These mountains are so confused by Fischart when he speaks of seeking Dem Gral oder Venusberg that we fell sure of a connection between them. Add to this what the Chronicler quoted by Casper Abel, that Lohengrin comes out of the mountain where Venus dwells in the Gral, and we have conclusive evidence that two, the Gral and the Venusberg are the same. The Chronology shows, furthermore, that the Grail is first in point of time and is therefore the source of the Venusberg legend.

Wagner wrote Tannhauser in three acts. The following is the way in which he combined the above myths:

Tannhauser, a famous Thuringian minstrel, is lured into the kingdom of Holda, the Teutonic Venus. Her abode is in a cavern in the mountain of Horselberg or Venusberg, near the haunts of men.

In the first act the outer fairness of this sensual monarchy is shown. But after months of the soul-destroying pleasures, Tannhauser remembers the life in the outer world, the wholesome, simple duties, especially does he think of the fairest and gentlest

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1- Barto - Studies in Tannhauserlegend







of maidens, the Princess Elisabeth, niece of Landgrave.

The minstrel calls on the Virgin's grace to save him and at once Venus and her kingdom disappear. Tannhauser is alone in a peaceful valley, he hears sounds of the country. He also hears Pilgrims singing and is touched with repentance. Former friends discover him worshipping at a shrine. Wolfram Von Eschenbach, a close friend who is in love with Elisabeth, is one of them. Tannhauser will not return with them, until Wolfram tells him of Elisabeth, who has grown wan and pale since the minstrel's departure.

The second act opens with the minstrels gathered for a tourney of song in the Wartburg. Elisabeth's Uncle, upon hearing of Tannhauser's return and knowing who Elisabeth loves, offers Elisabeth's hand as the prize to the winner. Tannhauser's voice and ability to sing made him easily the favorite of the tourneys. Wolfram and Tannhauser enter the Wartburg together just before the contest begins, and Tannhauser meets Elisabeth here for the first time since his return. They exchange vows before Wolfram.

Wolfram's name is the first to be drawn in the tournament. He sings of love, pure and chaste, of which he is content to worship afar. Then Walter Von Vogelweide sings his poetical conviction of spiritual bliss. But Tannhauser, under the spell of Venus, sings the Voluptuous joys of unholly love and recommends the delights of Venus' above. The ladies leave the Wartburg, the men press Tannhauser with drawn swords, Elisabeth springs forward and begs that he be allowed to live and repent. Landgrave advises Tannhauser to seek pardon in the Eternal City. Pilgrims' voices



can be heard and Tannhauser hastens to join them.

The last act opens with Elisabeth worshipping at a shrine and Wolfram watching in the distance, she spent her time praying for the return of Tannhauser. Pilgrims' voices are heard in the distance, they are returning from Rome and Elisabeth expects Tannhauser to be with them. As the procession passes she fails to find him with them. Elisabeth turns to the shrine and prays for death, she declines Wolfram's escort home, and departs in sadness. Wolfram remains after her departure, the night deepens and with the darkness he recognizes Tannhauser approaching in rags. Tannhauser relates his fruitless journey to Rome, he bore the severest penance, walking on thorns and stones with bleeding feet, sleeping on ice and snow, leaving the comforts for those who were less sin-burdened. After reaching the end of the terrible journey, he implored forgiveness of the Pope. The Pope told him he could no more be pardoned than the rod which he held could spring into life. As Tannhauser finished the story, Venus appeared in a rosy mist, but Wolfram uttered the name of Elisabeth and Venus disappeared.

The morning breaks, in the distance a funeral bell is heard and a bier upon which Elisabeth lies is borne down the hill. Tannhauser calls upon the soul of Elisabeth to plead for him in Heaven and then dies. As the morning grows, a party of pilgrims approach bearing the Pope's staff, budded and growing, which is a symbol of Tannhauser's redemption.



## CHAPTER IV.

### LOHENGRIN

Lohengrin is the hero of the German version of the legend of the Knight of the Swan. Two motives that are common in folk lore are the basis of Lohengrin,- the changing of human beings into swans, and the envious wife who brings disaster.

The swan appears in a variety of circumstances in myths. In classical mythology it appears as the bird of Apollo. In Scandinavian lore, the myth of the Swan Maidens, who have the gift of prophecy and are sometimes confused with Valkyries.

According to the early English prose romances, the myth appears as The Knight of the Swan. It is the story of Helias king of Lyleforte, son of king Oriant and Beatrice. Beatrice had eight children at one birth, one of which was a daughter. Matabrune, the mother-in-law stole all the children except Helias and turned them into swans. Helias spent all his life in quest of his sister and brothers, that he might disenchant them and restore them to their human forms.

Originally the Swan was the little brother who, in one version of the seven swans, was compelled through the destruction of his golden chain to remain in swan form and attach himself to the fortunes of one of his brothers.





The wife's desire to know her husband's origin is a parallel of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, and bore in medieval times a similar mystical interpretation. Psyche was a very beautiful maiden with whom Cupid fell in love. The god told her she must never seek to know who he was; but Psyche could not resist the curiosity of looking at him as he lay asleep. A drop of hot oil falling from Psyche's lamp, falling on the Love-God, woke him, and he instantly took to flight. Psyche now wandered from place to place, persecuted by Venus; but after enduring ineffable troubles, Cupid came at last to her rescue, married her, and bestowed on her immortality.<sup>1</sup>

The Lohengrin legend is localized on the lower Rhine, and its incident takes place at Antwerp. Nijmegen, Cologne and Mainz. In its application it falls into sharp division in the hands of German and French poets. By the Germans it was twined to mystical use by being attached to the Grail legend; in France it was adapted to glorify the family of Godfrey de Bouillon. The German story makes its appearance in the last stanzas of Wolfram Von Eschenbach's "Parzival" which is discussed in detail in the latter part of this chapter. Between 1283 and 1290, a Bavarian disciple of Wolfram's adopted the story and developed it into an epic poem of nearly 8000 lines, incorporating episodes of Lohengrin's prowess in Tournament, his wars with Henry I against the heathen Hungarians and the Saracens, and incidentally proving a detailed picture of the everyday life of people of high condition. The epic of Lohengrin is put by the anonymous writer into the mouth of Wolfram, who is made to relate it during the contest



of singers at Wartburg in proof of his superiority of knowledge of sacred things over Klingsor, the Magician, and the poem is thus linked in to German tradition. Its connection with Perzival implies a mystic application. The consecrated wafer shared by Lohengrin and the swan on their voyage is one of more obvious means taken by the poet to give the tale character of an allegory of the relations between Christ, the Church and the human soul.<sup>1</sup>

The French legend of the Knight of the Swan is attached to the house of Bouillon, and although William of Tyn refers to it about 1170 as fable, it was incorporated without question by later annalists. It forms part of the cycle of the Chansons de Yeste dealing with the Crusade, and relates how Helias, Knight of the Swan is guided by the Swan to help the Duchess of Bouillon and marries her daughter, Ida of Beatrix, in circumstances exactly parallel to the adventures of Lohengrin and Elsa Brabaut and with like results. Their daughter marries Eustache, count of Boulogne, and had three sons, the Eldest of whom Godfrey is the future king<sup>2</sup>.

In England the story first appears in a short poem preserved among the cotton manuscripts of the British Museum and entitled "Chevelere Assigne". This was edited by G. E. V. Utterson in 1820 for the Roxburghe Club. The E. E. T. S. edition is accompanied by a set of photographs of a 14th century ivory casket, on which the

.....  
-1- Encyclopedia Britannica

-2- Encyclopedia Britannica



story is depicted in thirty six compartments. An English prose romance, "Helia's Knight of the Swan", was translated by Robert Copland, and printed by W. Copland, 1550, is founded on a French romance *La Genealogie ....de Godeffroy de Bouillon* (printed 1504)<sup>1</sup>.

Henderson and Weston treat the sources of Wagner in a slightly different manner. Wagner's method of literary composition was to gather all versions of a national mythological legend, and select the incidents and characters which fitted to his plans.<sup>2</sup> The sources of Wagner's poem as Henderson gives in addition to *Parzival* were *Der Jüngere Titurel*, a poem by Albrecht Von Scharffenberg, giving a full account of the Holy Grail and its guardians, and also recounting the life and death of Lohengrin after leaving Brabant; *Der Schwanen - Ritter*, by Konard Von Wurzburg, a poem dating from the latter half of the thirteenth century; "*Lohengrin*", a poem by an unknown Bavarian poet and the popular form of the legend as given by the Grimm Brothers in the "*Deutsche Sagen*."

As Henderson relates the Lohengrin poem differs from the above poem. In this version the story is : Elsa, daughter of the Duke of Brabant, is left in care of Frederic of Telvamund. He aspires to her hand, but she refuses him. He then accuses her before the emperor of having promised to be his wife and having broken the promise. The emperor declares that the case must be tried by the ordeal of battle. A passing falcon falls at Elsa's feet

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1- The Encyclopedia Britannica

2- Henderson - Richard Wagner







with a bell tied to its leg. In her agitation she rings the bell. The sound reaches Mousaloot, where it acts as a summons to Lohengrin, the son of Parzival. A Swan appears on the river and Lohengrin knows he is ordered to go with it. On arriving at Antwerp, five days later, Lohengrin is received with honour, and with Elsa sets out for the court of the Emperor at Mayence. There the combat is fought and Telramund defeated. Lohengrin marries Elsa, having extracted from her the promise not to ask his name or country. They live together for two years. Then in a joust Lohengrin conquers the Duke of Cleves and breaks his arm. The Duchess of Cleves sneers at Lohengrin because no one knows who he is. This preys on the mind of Elsa till she asks the fatal question. Then Lohengrin in the presence of the Emperor and the Court, tells his story, steps into the swan-boat and vanishes.

The story of the "Chevalier au Aygne" as found in the Grimm version, combines the two legends of transformation of human beings into swans, and the swan-knight. This again is a different version from the English version of the knight of the swan given above. The mother-in-law hates the mother of the children and endeavors to have the children killed and throw the suspicion on the mother. A knight is to make away with the children, but he leaves them with a hermit. The King's mother finds out that the children are still alive and sends a servant to kill them. The servant only finds six of the children. These children were born with chains around their necks. The servant first removes the



chains and when the chains are removed the children turn into swans and fly away. The mother-in-law accuses the mother, who has to prove her innocence or die. An angel appears before Helyas, the child whom the servant did not find, and tells him of his Mother's danger. Helyas appears at court and defends his mother. The chains are brought forward, the swans appear, and when the chains are put on the swans' necks, they resume their original shape.

In this second part of Grimm's version, Helyas appears strikingly similar to Lohengrin. Helyas is summoned by a boat drawn by a swan. He is to go to Mimwegen before the Emperor Otto and defend the Duchess of Bouillon who is accused of murdering her husband, by a brother-in-law. Helyas conquers and marries the daughter of the Duchess. He has a son Godfrey of Bouillon. After seven years the Duchess asks Helyas who he is and where he comes from. Helyas goes away without answering. Henderson says, "the Lohengrin legend has been used to manufacture a supernatural father for Godfrey of Bouillon. It was not at all uncommon for the poets of the Mediaeval period thus to celebrate the mighty."

The source of Wolfram's Parzival, to which Wagner owes the character of Elsa, is extensively discussed by Weston. Wolfram's sources are: Chretien De Troyes, who tells only of a book given to him by count Philip of Flanders; Kiot, the Provencal, whose source is a M.S. at Toledo, written in Arabic by a heathen astronomer. It has been discovered in addition to this source that Kiot



searched through the chronicles of various countries for confirmation of the M.S. and finally found the record of the Grail kings in the chronicles of Anjou.

Henry Fitz Empress, an angevin count who ascended to the throne of England, stirred up and encouraged his subjects to collect the floating popular traditions of his race and weave them into a narrative which passed for the history of the Angevin courts.

Wolfram's Parzival served to set Wagner on the track and subject Elsa's character. Wagner in two lines of the "Parzival" found a suggestion as to her nature of which he made eloquent use in his first act:

"In God was her trust, whatever men might in their anger speak. And, guiltless, she bare the vengeance her folks on her head would break."

Elsa in Wagner's Opera had absolute confidence in providence to send her a knight of whom she had dreamed. Her unresisting attitude in the presence of her accuser and her kind were drawn from the above lines of Wolfram. The story of Wolframs Parzival is: The Duchess of Brabant refused to be the wife of any man save him whom God should send her. Lonengrin was sent from the Grail or Monsalvat, conquered, and married Elsa with the stipulation that he should not be asked his name or race.

From the story of the swan-knight, Wagner received the idea of the transformation of a human being into a swan by a malignant woman. His dramatic development of this idea is seen in the plot







of the opera. The accusation of Telramund is increased by the assertion that Elsa has murdered her brother in the "Chevalier au lygne", the accusation being made by the Queen's mother-in-law. In Wagner's opera Elsa's brother is turned into a swan by a lady in waiting, one Ortrud. Ortrud is in love with Frederic of Telramund, whom the Duke of Brabant would have marry Elsa. Ortrud, jealous, turns the suspicion on Elsa by turning Elsa's brother into a swan. Ortrud also performs the same office as the Duchess of Cleves in the legend of the Bavarian Lohengrin, that of creating distrust and questionings in the mind of Elsa. In the Bavarian's version the scene is laid at Antwerp and shifted to Mayence, but in Wagner's version the scene remains at Antwerp. The heroine is the same in each, the Duchess of Brabant, but the Emperor is the Bavarian Otto, while in Wagner's he is Henry I, who reigned in 918-936. In his treatment of this character, Wagner adheres to historic truth. Henry was a progressive and an aggressive monarch, and he not only led his people in successful wars against the Dens, but brought order out of political chaos at home. It is to these historical matters that the king refers in the speeches of the opening scene of the opera.

The first act of the opera leans on the sources of the story, but Wagner's artistic ability is shown in the way he utilized his materials. Wagner requires the knight to come immediately to the woman in distress. The swan brings the knight, Lohengrin, who is to fell Telramund with one stroke in equal combat. The love of Lohengrin for Elsa is in accordance with the old stories, and



so is Elsa's offer of her crown, her domain, and herself.

In the second act we find more fully the genius of Wagner. The original sources give only suggestions of it. Telramund, defeated, reproaches Ortud for inducing him to accuse Elsa. He recognizes Lohengrin's sacred character while Ortud scoffs at it, and points out that his power will be at an end if his name and from whence he came is told. She asserts Lohengrin won by Magic, breaking the sacred ordeal, and says if he can be wounded his power will vanish. Telramund is to wound Lohengrin and declare Lohengrin won by Magic, and Ortud is to put distrust into Elsa's mind. At first Ortud cannot shake Elsa's trust. As Elsa is going to church to be married, Ortud flings the taunt of namelessness at her. Telremund appears before Elsa and the King and Lohengrin declaring Lohengrin conquered by magic. The King and nobles are faithful to Lohengrin. Telramund whispers to Elsa that if she will let him into Lohengrin's chamber he will clear all doubt. Lohengrin orders Telramund away and proceeds to the altar with Elsa.

In the final act on the wedding night, not after years of married life, Elsa asks the fatal question. On the river bank where Lohengrin first appeared he tells the story of the Holy Grail Monsalvat, and the origin. Ortud announces that the missing brother is the swan and places the chain about his neck. Lohengrin calls upon God and the spell is broken, - the heir of Brobant is restored to his sister's arms. Lohengrin departs in a boat, drawn by a dove, the messenger of peace.



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